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Creating positive learning communities for diasporic indigenous students

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ABSTRACT

Diasporic Indigenous students include the lived realities of diverse Indigenous students living in the United States with familial, relational, and transnational ties to Indigenous communities and *pueblos* of origin in Abya Yala, also known as Latin America. In this article, we advocate for the creation of positive learning communities to best support diasporic Indigenous students in schools and beyond. Recommendations for educators include understanding the effects of anti-Indigenous discrimination within Latinx communities and reflecting on the ways schooling may unintentionally reproduce colonial or damage-centred perspectives about Indigenous Peoples. The successful cultivation of positive learning communities also requires schools to learn from and cultivate partnerships with diasporic Indigenous families and surrounding communities to uplift social-emotional learning that honours Indigenous *comunalidad*. We hope the information presented in this article contributes to promoting equitable learning outcomes for all students by disrupting colonial stereotypes and misinformation about Indigeneity and uplifting contemporary Indigenous *saberes*.

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Introduction

In this article, we use the term *diasporic Indigenous students* to include the lived realities of diverse Indigenous students living in the United States with familial, relational, and transnational ties to Indigenous communities and *pueblos* of origin in Abya Yala.[1] Drawing from the critical work of Blackwell, Boj Lopez, and Urrieta (2017) on Critical Latinx Indigeneities, in this article we recognise that Indigenous Peoples in Abya Yala have unique and distinct experiences that fall outside broader pan-ethnic Latinx and mestizx[2] labels. Moreover, as they migrate and establish themselves in the United States, diasporic Indigenous Peoples continue to be racialized and exposed to the structures of colonialism and anti-Indigenous domination transplanted from Abya Yala to the United States (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, and Urrieta 2017; Gutiérrez Nájera 2010; Kearney 1998, 2000; Stephen 2007).

Moving away from the limitations of Latinidad, in this article we highlight the diasporic element of Indigenous students growing up and living in the U.S. and on stolen Native Land. While some diasporic Indigenous students are recent arrivals to the U.S., others are born and raised entirely in the U.S. Yet, despite their diverse migration and citizenship status, diasporic Indigenous students retain transnational ties to their Indigenous communities of origin in Abya Yala and practice

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communal belonging across generations in the United States (Casanova, Mesinas, and Martinez-Ortega 2021a; Nicolás 2021; Urrieta 2019; Urrieta and Martínez 2011). Through traditional everyday Indigenous practices of *comunalidad*[3], diasporic Indigenous communities reinforce Indigenous belonging despite being far away from their homeland (Nicolás 2021; Urrieta and Martínez 2011). Thus, the experiences of diasporic Indigenous students are incredibly multifaceted as they navigate multiple communities and more specifically, schooling contexts.

In this article, we advocate for creating positive learning communities to best support diasporic Indigenous students in schools and beyond. To do this, the article is divided into four sections, namely: (1) The importance of affirming diasporic Indigenous students in U.S. classrooms, (2) sociocultural learning theory and positive learning communities, (3) recommendations for educators, and (4) a conclusion. The first section is an overview of available research about diasporic Indigenous students in U.S. classrooms. The second section defines positive learning communities from a sociocultural learning framework and how it is applied to diasporic Indigenous students. The third section includes recommendations related to anti-racist teaching practices, radical healing, social-emotional learning, and restorative literacies for diasporic Indigenous students. The manuscript ends with a call to action encouraging teachers, administrators, and stakeholders in education to continue the vital work of creating positive learning communities inside and outside of schools for diasporic Indigenous students and families.

As a final point, it is important to clarify our perspectives and positionalities as authors of this article. The knowledges and experiences shared in this article are specific to each of the Indigenous communities we support, namely Ñuu Savi[4] (Mixtec) (Kovats Sánchez); Zapotec (Mesinas); Yucatec Maya (Casanova); K'iche and Mam (Barillas Chón); and Ixil, Q'eqchi', Mam, and Kichwa de Saraguro (Pentón Herrera). Also, Kovats Sánchez is a cisgender woman of colour that identifies as a transnational meXicana. Her work is deeply tied to her involvement with and for Ñuu Savi communities in California over the last 16 years and her own experiences with both the spoils and subjugation of the settler-colonial project (Patel 2014), having grown up in Guerrero, Mexico, and California's Central Valley. Mesinas is a cisgender, diasporic, Oaxacan-Zapotec woman who is an insider and outsider within her community. Her work is informed by her simultaneous identities as she engages in critical scholarship in relation to Indigenous communities, including collaborations with diasporic Zapotecs in the United States and Mexico for over ten years. Casanova is a Yucatec-Maya, cisgender, immigrant woman. Her positionality as an insider, part of the Yucatec-Maya diaspora, and outsider, as a researcher, is something she consistently reflects on in order to decolonise her research methods and to be able to build rapport and trust with the Yucatec-Maya youth she collaborates with. Barillas Chón is Maya Poqomam in the diaspora who is both an insider and outsider to the different Indigenous youth and communities he has worked with over the last fourteen years. Pentón Herrera identifies as a mixed Latinx with European, African, and Taíno ancestry. He learned of his Caribbean Taíno roots and Indigenous ancestry from Central America, in particular, in recent years, and this knowledge has motivated him personally and professionally to engage in deep reflections about his identity and in conversations with his family about their history.

The importance of affirming diasporic indigenous students in U.S. classrooms

Embedded within the political, economic, and languaged systems of nation-states in Abya Yala is the historical discrimination of Indigenous Peoples (Speed 2019). The systemic and disproportionate discrimination of Indigenous Peoples, compared to that of non-Indigenous and monolingual-Spanish speakers, is a continuation of racialized labour and languaged hierarchies that have organised everyday life in Abya Yala since the advent of colonisation in the Western hemisphere (Flores 2013; Rama 1996). A current example of the built-in political and economic discrimination of Indigenous Peoples is the Guatemalan repression of the Maya Q'eqchi' in El Estor, in the Izabal department. The Guatemalan national police on October 23, 2021, brutally tear-gassed the Q'eqchi' for

exercising their communal rights of defending their Land against unlawful mining activities carried out by the Fenix mine, operated by the Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel (CGN).[5] Along similar lines, the Mexican Center for Environmental Law (2021) documented the targeted assassination of 28 Indigenous Land defenders across Abya Yala since 2020.

This historical and systemic oppression has forced many Indigenous Peoples to flee their homelands to seek refuge in the U.S. (Jonas and Rodríguez 2014; Velasco Ortiz and París Pombo 2014). In the case of diasporic Maya Peoples from Guatemala, who have been part of the U.S. Latinx demographic since at least the 1970s (Jonas and Rodríguez 2014), recent migration trends show an increase in unaccompanied minors (Canizales and O'Connor 2021) some of whom are Mam, K'iche', and Q'anjob'al (Heidbrink 2020; Nolan 2019). These diasporic Mayas, who sometimes experience interrupted, limited, or no formal schooling in Guatemala, end up residing in urban and agricultural regions such as California's Bay Area, Omaha's metropolitan area in Nebraska, Southern Florida, and the San Luis Valley in Colorado among other locations. Recently arrived Maya migrants add to the various already established and strong diasporic Indigenous groups from Abya Yala, including Ñuu Savi, P'urhépechas, and Zapotecs who have been in the country since at least the Bracero Program of 1942 (Kearney 2000).

Diasporic Indigenous youth, once in the U.S., enter urban classrooms and other educational settings that are not yet well-prepared to work with them (Barillas Chón 2022; López and Irizarry 2019). Despite diasporic Indigenous Peoples' presence in educational settings and membership in the U.S., there is generally a dearth of educational research on them. Thus, it is difficult to approximate how many diasporic Indigenous Peoples from Abya Yala are in the U.S. educational system. Works by Latinx and Indigenous scholars are amending this research inattention by producing studies describing and elucidating the languaged practices and identity developments within K-12 schools and higher educational settings of Ixil, Zapotec, Ñuu Savi, P'urhépecha, Maya, Nahua, and Kichwa, among others (e.g. Barillas Chón 2019, 2022; Casanova 2016, 2019; Kovats Sánchez 2018, 2019, 2021; Mesinas 2021; Mesinas and Perez 2016; Pentón Herrera 2020, 2021a, 2021b). These scholars point to how the US's political disregard of Indigenous diasporic people, an educational system that neglect its Indigenous diasporic students', coupled with insufficient appropriate pedagogical interventions (e.g. bilingual programmes premising on the ability of Indigenous speakers to speak and write in Spanish), contributes to the liminality of Indigenous languages and identities by reproducing colonial language hierarchies.

These scholars note how Latinxs in the U.S. reenact similar racist and colonial logics that Indigenous Peoples have been subjected to in their contexts of departure (e.g. Barillas Chón 2019; Kovats Sánchez 2018; Pentón Herrera 2021b). Diasporic Indigenous Peoples' racialized, languaged, and colonial experiences in their countries of origin are significantly different from other Latinxs' experiences. Moreover, these lived experiences travel with Indigenous Peoples into the U.S. Once in the U.S., the colonial logics that impact Indigenous Peoples' everyday life interact with a U.S colonial system, adding additional layers of racialisation that Indigenous Peoples must contend with (Canizales 2015).

Sociocultural learning theory and positive learning communities

To develop a positive learning community for diasporic Indigenous students in U.S. classrooms, it is essential to first understand the foundation of sociocultural learning theory. Learning and development occur in socially and culturally shaped contexts (Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003). Sociocultural learning theory emphasises that learning takes place through social interactions and communications (dialectic method) with family, peers, teachers, and other experts (Vygotsky 1986). Learning depends on interacting with others through activity facilitated by tools (oriented outward and transforming a dominant social reality, e.g. books) and signs (oriented inward and internalising knowledge, e.g. writing). Language plays a central role in the internalisation and mastery of learning a specific task. A positive learning environment needs to encourage learners to interact with each

other and engage in spontaneous (informal) knowledge construction (e.g. knowledge from family) and scientific (formal) learning (e.g. school concepts) (John-Steiner and Mahn 1996). To promote learning, student-centred pedagogy is crucial. Students learn through carefully structured collaboration as they participate in shared practices (Gutiérrez and Rogoff 2003). A key aspect of the sociocultural learning theory is reciprocal learning, where facilitated by the instructor, students collaborate, teach each other, and learn from one another. Teachers must build a positive learning community with opportunities for student-to-student discussion and collaboration and where diasporic Indigenous students' strengths, such as their funds of knowledge (Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg 1992) and community cultural wealth (Yosso 2005), are acknowledged and valued.

The framework for positive learning communities draws on sociocultural learning theory because learning is situated within supportive relationships that include meaningful practices. Such approaches create accessible pathways that embrace diverse forms of knowledge possessed by community members. For Indigenous families and communities, forming "a community of learners" (Rogoff, Bartlett, and Goodman Turkanis 2001, 7) is an essential pedagogical approach as both children and adults engage in learning activities with their respective coordinated responsibilities. In this collective approach, adults guide children and young adolescents to foster their learning (Rogoff 1990). Previous research demonstrates how the inclusion of cultural and linguistic resources in classroom learning promoted students' social and cognitive development (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda 1999). Furthermore, Casanova, Mesinas, and Martinez-Ortega (2021a) highlight how diasporic Indigenous students and community members create their own Indigenous learning communities within and outside of schools that ultimately lead to youth cultivating assets, such as diverse linguistic repertoires, Indigenous ways of knowing, and a sense of belonging. Positive learning communities, including diasporic Indigenous spaces, highlight the importance of collective pedagogical approaches that leverage their learners' assets.

Recommendations for educators

Recognising colonial history and implementing anti-racist teaching practices

To better serve diasporic Indigenous students, it is critical that educators, administrators, and stakeholders acknowledge the legacy of colonialism and anti-Indigenous discrimination in Abya Yala and its manifestation within migrant communities in the United States. Several studies document how Latinx mestizx youth engage in anti-Indigenous behaviours in the classroom, calling diasporic Indigenous students pejorative names and teasing them for their darker skin complexion, height, home language, accent(s), and other features associated with harmful Indigenous stereotypes (Barillas Chón 2010; Casanova 2012; Equipo de Cronistas Oaxaqueños 2013; Kovats Sánchez 2018, 2021; Nicolás 2012; Pentón Herrera 2021b; Perez, Vasquez, and Burial 2016). As such, developing a historical and racial consciousness about the intersections of Indigeneity and Latinidad can influence educators' abilities to promote equitable educational outcomes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

For educators of Latinx descent, in particular, this requires constant reflexivity on the persistent colonial and damage-centred perspectives about Indigenous Peoples that are embedded within the Latinx community and, more specifically, within the conceptualisation of mestizaje. While mestizaje theoretically implies a unification of Indigenous ancestry and western European heritage, it is also representative of Latin America's violent history of colonisation (Bonfil Batalla 1989). The construction of mestizaje is tied to imperialist attempts across Latin America to establish a singular ethno-racial identity that blurred many people's connection to their Indigenous heritages, languages, and traditions (Forbes 2005; Urrieta 2017). The conceptualisation of mestizaje has shaped entire Latin American countries to associate their Indigenous heritage as a residual past rather than a contemporary aspect of their collective national identity (Kovats Sánchez 2021).

Consequently, anti-Indigenous and colonial perspectives are often (intentionally and unintentionally) reproduced in the classroom when educators minimise Indigenous languages by referring to them as "dialects"[6] or incorrectly categorise all recently arrived students from Latin America as native Spanish speakers (Barillas Chón 2010; Kovats Sánchez 2010). Teaching about Indigenous Peoples exclusively in the past is another way colonial regimes of knowledge are reproduced, perpetuating the myth that Indigenous Peoples no longer exist in the present. Additionally, anti-Indigenous bullying by Latinx peers reveals persistent colonial and harmful attitudes toward diasporic Indigenous students (Kovats Sánchez 2010; Casanova 2012; Martinez Morales, 2012). In a study conducted by Kovats Sánchez (2018), for instance, some diasporic Indigenous students developed negative associations with their Indigenous heritage as a result of anti-Indigenous discrimination from peers. Others mitigated teasing from their Latinx classmates by falsely claiming they were from Mexico City instead of from Oaxaca, a state commonly (and often pejoratively) known for its large Indigenous population. It is important to point out that anti-Indigenous bullying often goes unnoticed or is minimised by educators and administrators, adding to the isolation of diasporic Indigenous students in schools (Barillas Chón 2010; Casanova 2012; Kovats Sánchez, 2010; 2018; Perez, Vasquez, and Burial 2016; Ruiz and Barajas 2012; Velasco 2010). This type of discriminiation also extends well beyond the classroom, which was recently magnified in mainstream media when three Latinx Los Angeles City Council members were caught making pejorative remarks about Indigenous immigrants from Oaxaca, among other historically marginalised groups (Associated Press 2022). Accordingly, naming and explicitly addressing anti-Indigenous peer interactions not only supports diasporic Indigenous students but also challenges the persistent and harmful colonial stereotypes internalised and reproduced within Latinx mestizx families, and communities.

Unlearning racist and colonial attitudes, however, cannot occur solely at the individual level. We recommend that teacher credential and preparation programmes integrate larger conversations into their coursework about the effects of anti-Indigenous discrimination and, more importantly, how Western schools reproduce colonialism. In addition to integrating curriculum that uplifts Indigenous histories and experiences, educators and future educators must critically examine the deep roots of Western schooling practices (e.g. Native boarding schools, forced assimilation, English-only movement) and their tensions with Indigenous forms of education (Calderon, 2014).

In this same vein, curriculum, especially with the emergence of ethnic studies in K-12, must integrate diasporic Indigenous narratives and histories. This includes a curriculum that deconstructs essentialized Latinx histories that invisibilize Indigenous Peoples or exclusively position them as pre-Columbian relics of the past (Kovats Sánchez 2021). Indigenous histories must be attached to actual and contemporary Indigenous villages, places, and people (Alberto 2016). That also means moving away from damage-centred frameworks that only focus on the pain and loss of Indigenous Peoples (Calderón 2016; Tuck 2009) and using curriculum instead to celebrate students' survivance (Vizenor 2008). The development of such a curriculum must include the participation (and compensation) of diasporic Indigenous community members. As outlined in the introduction, diasporic Indigenous communities are incredibly diverse with ties to various regions across Abya Yala and distinct cultural practices and languages. To foster inclusive learning communities that account for Indigenous diversity, educators and schools must identify the regions, *pueblos* of origin, and languages of their diasporic Indigenous student population.

We also encourage educators and schools to learn from positive learning communities already created by diasporic Indigenous Peoples outside of the classroom (Casanova, Mesinas, and Martinez-Ortega 2021a; Mesinas 2021). Cultivating reciprocal partnerships with regional and local community-based and non-profit organisations create powerful opportunities for educators and students to deepen their knowledge and address issues faced by contemporary diasporic Indigenous Peoples. In 2011, for instance, the Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) launched an anti-bullying campaign titled "No Me Llames Oaxaquita" [don't call me Oaxaquita] to ban the use of the anti-Indigenous and racial epithet in the Oxnard School District. Within the same year, the resolution was unanimously passed by the Board of Trustees (Esquivel, 2012).

Other community-based organisations serving diasporic Indigenous communities include Frente Indígena de Binacional de Organizaciones (FIOB), Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO), and Comunidades Indígenas en Liderazgo (CIELO), Asociación Mayab, and Organización Regional de Oaxaca (ORO).

Radical healing to humanise learning for diasporic indigenous students

The healing processes enacted by diasporic Indigenous communities are critical to explicitly acknowledging their historical and intergenerational trauma. This trauma is the result of enduring systemic, racist, and colonial policies, attitudes, and practices that permeate the daily lives of diasporic Indigenous Peoples (Barillas Chón 2010; Casanova 2016; Chavez-Dueñas et al. 2019). In acknowledging this trauma, radical healing is not only surviving oppressive, colonial systems, but resisting them through the development of critical consciousness, the process of reflecting on systems of oppression affecting one's life and addressing these systems through actions that challenge them (Diemer and Li 2011). Psychologists have developed a framework of radical healing for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) grounded in collectivism, critical consciousness, radical hope, resistance, cultural authenticity, and self-knowledge (French et al. 2020). Thus, in centring healing practices as part of learning, there are opportunities to develop a more holistic understanding of the assets diasporic Indigenous students bring and incorporate them into learning spaces.

In diasporic Yucatec-Maya communities, for example, radical healing practices are found in the testimonies of youth speaking about forming part of *jaranas* or dance groups and Maya language classes at local cultural organisations. Additionally, the youth developed collective, resilient Indigeneity or the resistance to letting go of their Indigenous culture and identity, along with an increased desire to learn their cultural knowledges through the stories shared by their families (Casanova 2019). Yucatec-Maya youth defined their Indigeneity as forming part of transnational networks with their families in Mexico and having awareness of Indigenous worldviews such as cosmovision, or the emphasis on having a harmonious coexistence with the sacred, living earth, including other living beings and the wider universe. Yucatec-Maya youth also emphasised the strong emotional connection or feeling to their Maya language, cultural knowledge systems, and community (Casanova 2019). The learning occurring in these diasporic Indigenous communal spaces, or in *comunalidad,* also extends to how families developed strategic ecologies of adaptation that contributed to personal, familial, and community growth within the oppressive and colonial structures that devalued their knowledge and capital (Casanova 2016; Yosso 2005). Families were central to the socialisation of diasporic youth in creating humanising spaces for them to develop their cultural knowledge, critical consciousness, and be their holistic selves (Casanova et al. 2021b).

Humanising learning in the classroom requires a level of *cariño* or care and explicit interest in learners' lives in order to create a stronger sense of belonging for the students. To do this, teachers must build caring relationships where the minoritized students are affirmed and not dismissed or 'subtracted,' so students will reciprocate this care (Parsons 2005; Valenzuela 1999). Educators should be critical of systemic inequalities and power dynamics within the educational system and be prepared to advocate for changing such systems that perpetuate oppression and trauma for students (Casanova and Alvarez 2022). Educators must develop activities that cultivate the cultural capital and familial and linguistic sources of knowledge that diasporic Indigenous students bring to the classroom from their communities (Casanova, Mesinas, and Martinez-Ortega 2021a; Yosso 2005). Creating a positive learning environment requires educators not only to possibly drastically change how they are teaching but also a willingness to expand their worldviews or known realities. It is important to engage students as experts of their own lived experiences and to incorporate healing and learning practices and values from their Indigenous communities in the classroom.

Indigenous cultural practices foster positive social-emotional learning

Diasporic Indigenous students actively participate and contribute to learning communities that foster their sociocultural development through their Indigenous ways of living. In these settings, youth are socialised to engage in integrated endeavours where they have active roles that contribute to their cultural practices. Such meaningful practices are not reflected in U.S. classroom spaces; hence, enacting culturally relevant knowledge systems would require educators to undergo a paradigm shift (Rogoff 1990) that would expand current pedagogies. Furthermore, education researchers understand the human engagement in cultural practices as core to the scientific study of learning (Bang 2015). In recent decades, psychology and education researchers have focused on social-emotional learning, the process where people learn to recognise and manage emotions, make decisions, care for others, develop meaningful relationships, and behave responsibly (Weissberg et al. 2015; Zins 2004). Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a key developmental process for children and youth. However, it is rooted in Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) ideals (Markus 2016) that do not represent all ethnic groups. Therefore, in its conceptualisation and research, the development of SEL should be expanded to be studied as a cultural phenomenon that goes beyond the ethnocentric values taught in U.S. schools.

Psychologists and educators must study how culturally rich learning communities led by caring adults who mentor youth through intergenerational collaboration and Indigenous ways of living (Bang, Montaño Nolan, and McDaid-Morgan 2018; Casanova 2019; McGinty and Bang 2016; Medin et al. 2014; Mesinas 2021) can contribute to youth positive development and expand existing SEL frameworks. For diasporic Indigenous Peoples living in the United States, their philosophies of belonging and *comunalidad* (Martínez Luna 2010, 2013) are present in the traditions and values they teach youth, which include inculcating emotional ties among individuals and connections to their Native communities across borders (Casanova 2019; Mesinas 2021; Urrieta 2019). Youth not only receive Indigenous forms of belonging (Casanova 2019; Kovats Sánchez 2018; Urrieta 2019) but also transform them as they internalise their cultural socialisation through their identity and affect. Mesinas (2021), for instance, observed that for diasporic Zapotecs from Oaxaca, Mexico, healing practices that centred *alegría* (joy) were found in the community's ways of living, including their intergenerational philharmonic band tradition from their *pueblo*. The philharmonic band provided community leaders with opportunities to teach the interconnectedness of music, culture, and values, just as it is done in their *pueblo*.

These Indigenous youth developed culturally-based social-emotional learning at the individual, interpersonal, and communal levels. Ranging from elementary school children to college-age young adults, diasporic Zapotec-origin youth learned *banda saberes* (band knowings) through their Indigenous cultural socialisation. Specifically, because the band is socially organised to promote the contributions and agency of its members, the Zapotec youth fostered strong, positive, and layered affect towards music, their peers/mentors, and their *pueblo*. This finding adds a critical cultural approach to the existing conceptualisation of social-emotional learning by expanding its sources and development to influential people and practices outside of classroom settings.

The Zapotec-origin philharmonic band is a positive learning community that teaches youth music, Indigenous ways of living, and affect. As an example, band leaders encourage youth to contribute to a new musical role when the band is missing a particular instrument. Problem-solving opportunities such as needing a member to play a new instrument foster youth's social awareness, self-awareness, and relationship skills. The multiple SEL competencies diasporic Zapotec youth learn within their communities can be transmitted to their other learning communities. Moreover, this Indigenous philharmonic band is integral to the emotional development, self-motivation, and stress management of their youth, as is demonstrated through their multifaceted and strong positive affect towards music, their Indigenous diaspora, and U.S.-based communities.

Oftentimes, diasporic Indigenous students are participating and contributing to their communities through familial and communal endeavours that highlight the values of *alegría* and

comunalidad, as they are deeply rooted in their Native epistemologies and ways of living. The youth develop positive identities and have a stronger sense of belonging when they engage in caring relationships with adult mentors through their Indigenous ways of living (Bang, Montaño Nolan, and McDaid-Morgan 2018; Casanova 2019; McGinty and Bang 2016; Medin et al. 2014; Mesinas and Perez 2016). This can be done at the start of an academic year when teachers and administrators get to know students and families through official school communication, parent-teacher introductions, and back-to-school night events. Furthermore, as educators begin to know their students, they can build upon the knowledge they learn from initial intakes to cultivate meaningful relationships with their students where they actively demonstrate their care. This approach can resonate with Indigenous students as they will see more adults care for them in similar manners they may experience within their Indigenous norms of socialisation. Lastly, the learning practices that diasporic Indigenous use, including the centring of emotion and healing, can be further developed if educators build upon the existing SEL competencies they possess by including their Indigenous-rooted SEL assets in their classrooms.

Restorative literacies and diasporic indigenous students

In formal schooling, literacies and social-emotional factors are inseparable and equally important. As such, in this article, we encourage readers to envision restorative-based practices as opportunities to build communities that support both. In the past 30–40 years, restorative-based frameworks have become popular across different fields in the North American context, more specifically in the U.S. and Canada. This philosophical and practical shift in the conceptualisation of *justice* in fields such as criminology, public policy and, more recently, education has been guided by traditional Indigenous knowledge and practices. In formal school settings, restorative-based frameworks such as restorative justice, restorative discipline, and restorative practices have propagated globally, and the number of yearly conferences and publications devoted to these topics forecast continued popularity. Restorative-based practices in the context of education, for the most part, have focused on building respectful school communities through the reparation of harm, conflict resolution, and social-emotional growth (see Evans and Vaandering 2016; Morrison and Vaandering 2012) with little attention devoted to its relationship to literacies.

In formal school settings, feeling part of the classroom and school community is of utmost importance for students. While thinking of the definition of *community* in school settings, it is important to recognise the vital interconnection between healthy human relationships and capable literacies practices. Thus, for students to feel like they truly belong in their school and classroom community, they must (1) be able to nurture healthy relationships of dignity, respect, and mutual concern for one another (Pentón Herrera and McNair 2021), and (2) have the opportunity to demonstrate and engage in capable literacies practices that validate their funds of knowledge and value (Wolter 2021). If one of these two elements is missing, students' social-emotional well-being will be affected, and their school performance and participation will suffer as a result.

For diasporic Indigenous students, being part of the community is all the more important because *comunalidad* is deeply rooted in their identities. When diasporic Indigenous students do not feel part of the classroom and/or school community, they feel devalued, alienated, and perceive that their funds of knowledge – their languages and literacies – are not worth sharing or relevant. In a recent study, Pentón Herrera (2021a) shared the story of Tranquilino, an adolescent Ixil student who arrived in the United States with limited formal education. In school, Tranquilino had a difficult time feeling part of the school community, not because he was unable to do so, but because his school and teachers were not prepared to go beyond the enforced 'basics' of literacy, approaching student competence from a traditional prescriptivist, print-based approach that placed Tranquilino at the margins. Traditional enforcement of language and literacy in formal schooling perpetuates colonial constructions of legitimacy (Tierney and Pearson 2021), excluding diasporic Indigenous students from the learning community both academically and emotionally.

Recognising the emancipatory power of literacies and healthy community-building within schools (McNair and Pentón Herrera 2022), restorative literacies (see Wolter 2021) are encouraged to support the social-emotional and academic development of diasporic Indigenous students within their classrooms. As defined by Wolter (2021), "restorative literacies is an approach to building and strengthening positive relationships among [students]' backgrounds and perspectives, as well as their variable skills, proficiencies, and fluencies … through an intentional system of response, repair, and restoration" (1). It is important to clarify the use of the word *restorative* to signify the need for healing (Hansen and Antsanen 2012) and the word *literacies* to acknowledge the multiple literacies individuals carry with them. Restorative literacies incorporate elements of restorative-based practices, and also recognise the dynamic nature of literacies beyond the constraint of its colonial constructions. Pentón Herrera (2022) shares examples of how restorative literacies-informed pedagogy can support diasporic Indigenous students by incorporating arts into the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classroom. Through the use of art (in the form of poems and drawings), diasporic Indigenous students engaged in storytelling became agentive and supportive of one another and built relationships of care and trust with their classroom community.

Indigenous languages of diasporic indigenous youth in the classroom

The recommendations for incorporating diasporic Indigenous youth's languages in the classroom are situated within a contextualisation of how language is racialized through raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores and Rosa 2015; Rosa and Flores 2017). Understanding how Indigenous Peoples are ascribed to racialized categories through their language use sheds light on the importance of culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris and Alim 2017), which are foundational to Indigenous survivance or *sobrevivencia* (Galván 2011). These identities, in turn, must be situated within Indigenous ways of knowing and being that are coupled with intergenerational collaborative learning.

Raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores and Rosa 2015; Rosa 2016; Rosa and Flores 2017) examine how language is used to racialize non-White subjects based on their language use. Rosa (2016) argued that in the U.S., the usual understanding of "standard" or "proper" English is often synonymous with Whiteness and vice versa. The existence of Black Vernacular English (BVE) and, to some extent Spanglish, for example, are testaments to the presence of raciolinguistic ideologies as "Black," "vernacular," and Span – are inserted in front of "English" to note a particular language deviation from the presumed standard or proper English language. One outcome of raciolinguistic ideologies for minoritized students who are multilingual, and whose language of origin is not English, is their framing as linguistically deficient (García et al. 2021).

Indigenous Peoples from Abya Yala experience raciolinguistic ideologies through multiple and oftentimes overlapping colonial layers. Diasporic Indigenous Peoples are subject to raciolinguistic ideologies in the U.S. that racialize them as "Latino/Hispanic," thus framing them as Spanish speakers, and their presumed Spanish as a detriment to English learning. Additionally, Indigenous Peoples are also subject to raciolinguistic ideologies in their countries of origin. In such contexts of origin, Indigenous languages are viewed through deficient frames that are obstacles to learning Spanish (Barillas Chón 2019). In this case, diasporic Indigenous Peoples experience multiple levels of racialisation through their languages, which are attacks on their Indigenous identities (Barillas Chón 2022). These identities, which include Indigenous languages as an important component, are intimately tied to Indigenous knowledges and ways of being (San Pedro, Carlos, and Mburu 2016). Thus, raciolinguistic ideologies are not only attacks on Indigenous and other non-normative languages but also on Indigenous knowledges and identities.

Teaching and working with diasporic Indigenous youth from a culturally sustaining pedagogical frame is a transformative approach to honouring and utilising Indigenous languages and knowledges in the classroom. One approach that teachers can implement is translanguaging (García 2009). Teachers are encouraged to engage in translanguaging work by asking themselves the

following questions: *What are my preconceived notions about Latinxs and their languages? What are my views about knowledge and language?* These questions open up opportunities for teachers to not only reflect on their preconceived notions of Latinxs and Indigenous youth but also develop strategies to include the diversity of Indigenous languages and knowledges in the classroom.

A practical way for teachers to support Indigenous youth in the classroom is by employing translanguaging practices in the classroom while assisting them in learning Spanish and English. Translanguaging practices may entail incorporating Indigenous cultural, linguistic, and knowledge resources in the curriculum. For instance, in collaboration with families, relatives, and other Indigenous community members, teachers can learn about and include Indigenous cosmologies and/or historical events in their teaching. An example of the incorporation of Maya stories in the classroom is found in Barillas Chón (2021) essay on the Guatemalan and Maya figure Tecum Uman. Barillas Chón illustrates how Tecum Uman, a contested figure, can serve as entry points into discussions of Indigeneity, Latinidad, and migrations. By including families, relatives, and other Indigenous community members, teachers validate the ancestral knowledges of their Indigenous students. What is more, by sharing stories from a critical standpoint, teachers can validate and welcome Indigenous students and their knowledges in the classroom while at the same time engaging with their students on critiques of colonial powers contributing to Indigenous displacements (Barillas Chón 2022; Barillas Chón, Montes, and Landeros 2021; San Pedro, Carlos, and Mburu 2016).

Conclusion

Diasporic Indigenous students encounter unique educational experiences that differ from their Latinx mestizx peers. They also represent a rapidly growing student population in schools across the United States (Pentón Herrera 2018; U.S. Department of Justice 2018). This article sought to expose educators, administrators, and stakeholders to anti-racist, humanising, and SEL practices that embrace and cultivate diasporic Indigenous students' familial and community knowledge systems as learning assets. To create positive learning communities that centre on Indigenous ways of knowing and belonging, educators must be better informed about Indigenous histories, healing processes, SEL, and restorative literacies relevant to diasporic Indigenous students. Additionally, educators must be willing to reflect and name our own internalised colonial narrative about Indigenous Peoples.

Integrating the recommendations set by this article ultimately requires educators to acknowledge the effects of anti-Indigenous discrimination within Latinx communities and continuously reflect on the ways schooling may unintentionally reproduce colonial or damage-centred perspectives about Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, the successful development of positive learning communities requires schools to learn from and cultivate partnerships with diasporic Indigenous families and surrounding communities. Identifying students' specific Indigenous communities of origin, languages, and cultural practices in the diaspora are central to social-emotional learning that honours *comunalidad*. Finally, these recommendations benefit not only diasporic Indigenous students but also promote equitable learning outcomes for all students by disrupting colonial stereotypes and misinformation about Indigeneity and uplifting contemporary Indigenous *saberes*.

We would like to end this manuscript with a call to action to all stakeholders supporting diasporic Indigenous students and families throughout the diaspora. More specifically, we encourage teachers, administrators, and those in positions of power to reflect upon the vitality of creating positive learning communities inside and outside learning spaces. For this, we leave some questions that remain unanswered in the literature, and we hope this manuscript will become a springboard for delving deeper into them:

- How are positive learning communities for diasporic Indigenous students defined and understood in different contexts throughout the diaspora?

- What constitutes a positive learning environment and community for diasporic Indigenous students?
- What constitutes a positive learning environment and community from the perspective of diasporic Indigenous families? (see Gómez Portillo 2021)

Notes

1. Abya Yala, meaning land in its full maturity, is a term employed by the Kuna of Panamá to refer to the American continents. Abya Yala is used in this manuscript in the same way as the Kuna to refer to Latin America.
2. The 'x' in Latinx and mestizx serves as a gender inclusive way to refer to peoples who are racialized. Our use of these gender-inclusive terms is reserved for these racialized peoples within the U.S. context.
3. *Comunalidad* generally refers to the community organisation of Native Peoples and/or to the spiritual, natural, ideological, and physical elements shared within Native communities. To learn more about *comunalidad* see Martínez Luna (2015).
4. The word Mixtec/o is derived from the Nahuatl language. After the conquest of the Aztec empire, Spanish authorities and missionaries utilised Nahuatl to name other Native communities. This is why most Indigenous groups in Mexico are commonly referred to by their name in Nahuatl (Kovats Sánchez 2019). To divest from colonial terminology and honour Ñuu Savi culture, language, and resistance, the term Ñuu Savi is used in place of Mixtec/o.
5. CGN is a subsidiary owned by the Solway Investment Group, a Swiss-based investment organisation.
6. Calling Indigenous languages "dialects" is a term historically used to designate Indigenous languages as inferior to the Spanish language. Referring to Indigenous languages as dialects may not always be intentionally discriminatory, but it exemplifies the disconnect between terminology and its sociohistorical implications (Kovats Sánchez 2019).

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